

COLOMBIA Forcibly displaced civilian population of the Riosucio Canyon,
municipality of Ituango, department of Antioquia
Robinson TABORDA TUBERQUIA (23), teacher (Abducted)

William GARCIA (22), peasant farmer, (Killed)

Rodrigo Antonio ECHAVARRIA (45), peasant farmer, (Killed)

Gabriel Angel MUÑOS, peasant farmer, (Killed)

A teacher was abducted and several people were killed during a paramilitary attack in northwestern Colombia. Hundreds of people have fled to a town three days' walk away. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the abducted teacher, Robinson Taborda Tuberquia, and believes that civilians in the area are in grave danger.

On 5 September paramilitaries reportedly belonging to the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, led an incursion into local communities in the Riosucio Canyon. They abducted Robinson Taborda Tuberquia along with two peasant farmers, forcing them into one of the helicopters. The peasant farmers were reportedly freed on 19 September, but the whereabouts of Robinson Taborda Tuberquia remain unknown.

During the same attack, the paramilitaries reportedly killed William García, Rodrigo Antonio Echavarría and Gabriel Angel Muños, having accused them of being guerrilla sympathisers.

Following the paramilitary attack, some 700 people have sought refuge in the town of Ituango, department of Antioquia

The paramilitaries reportedly arrived in the Riosucio Canyon on 4 September in two helicopters, making at least eight journeys to bring forces into the area. The helicopters were allowed to operate freely, despite a heavy military presence in the region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Paramilitary forces backed by the Colombian army and security forces commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. In 1989 the Colombian government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and directed the armed forces to combat and disband such groups. Yet they continue to operate, committing serious human rights violations, for example executing those they accuse of being guerilla supporters. On occasion this has included members of forcibly displaced communities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Robinson Taborda Tuberquia, and urging that his whereabouts are established, that he is released immediately and that those responsible for his abduction are brought to justice;
- expressing concern that helicopters used by paramilitaries were allowed to operate freely in an area with a strong security force presence;

- expressing concern for the safety of the displaced communities sheltering in Ituango, and urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Antioquia, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to combat and dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 571 286 7434 / 287 7939 / 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 337 1351

Salutation:Dear President / Excmo. Sr Presidente

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 571 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Governor of Antioquia department

Sr. Alberto Builes Ortega

Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia

Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106

Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Faxes:+57 4 381 1521

Salutation:Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organisation

Corporación Jurídica Libertad

Apartado Aérea 49027

Medellín, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 November 2000.